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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: September 22, 1967
5:30 p.m.

SUBJECT: Call by Greek Ambassador Palamas

PARTICIPANTS: Assistant Secretary Battle
Stuart W. Rockwell, Deputy Assistant Secretary
H. Daniel Brewster, Country Director for Greece

Ambassador Palamas

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Mr. Battle welcomed Ambassador Palamas to Washington. The Greek Ambassador responded that he was delighted to be here and recognized that he had a considerable task ahead. There were three main problems affecting Greek-U.S. relations: (1) the Greek domestic political situation and the problem of communist subversion; (2) the security problem, i.e., a need to maintain strong defenses on NATO's Southeastern flank; and (3) Greek-Turk relations centering primarily on the Cypriot problem.

The Greek political situation was unique in that Greek democracy had degenerated to the point where communist subversion was penetrating the political life to a dangerous degree. It was essential to return to constitutionalism and democratic ways but at the same time the threat of leftist extremism had to be isolated. Those working on a new constitution had this serious problem to face. He believed the military men in the Greek Government were sincere in their desire to complete their revolutionary task and let Greece return to a healthy political system. They were not there to establish a permanent authoritarian regime. If that should occur the entire picture would change and he, the Ambassador, doubted that he would be staying on in Washington to represent such a government. At this point he revealed that he had accepted the Washington assignment as an alternative to retirement. He chose the first course because of his belief that Greek-U.S. relations were important. The present situation called for mutual help and understanding.

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Speaking briefly to the point of the security problem, Ambassador Palamas said it was essential to keep Greece a strong NATO partner and help his country meet the objectives of the Alliance.

Ambassador Palamas then turned to the question of Greek-Turkish relations and noted that the Greek side had gone to the Evros summit meeting with great expectations because the Greeks were under the impression that a formula would be negotiable which provided for union with Greece with proper compensations and safeguards. By way of illustrating that ex-Foreign Minister Toumbas had certainly been under this impression last year, Ambassador Palamas spoke of the following exchange with him in Paris. Toumbas, when asked by the Turk Foreign Minister as to what the Greeks were prepared to offer in exchange for uniting Cyprus to Greece, replied "the sacrifice of Makarios." This was obviously not enough and the two Foreign Ministers then moved on to a more serious discussion of the question of compensation including a Turkish presence o. a NATO base. The Ambassador explained that at the Evros meeting the Greek side had offered Turkish sovereignty over a base but this had been rejected.

Mr. Battle at this point noted that we too had been disappointed at the lack of progress at the Evros summit meeting and expressed the earnest hope that the parties would continue to talk in an effort to find a mutually acceptable solution. Speaking more generally to the points raised by Ambassador Palamas, Mr. Battle said that he must state candidly the Ambassador would have a difficult and busy time in Washington. He would find a very genuine concern in the U.S. regarding recent developments in Greece. This was shared by the public, Congress and the Executive Branch and had led to a period of cool relations. The very fact that Greece had a heritage of democratic ways and was such a close friend of the U.S. made the concern over what happened that much greater. The problems facing Greek-U.S. relations, particularly in the field of military aid, had to be viewed in the context of the broader examination going on within the U.S. Government of its arms policies. The mood of Congress was one of careful soul-searching as regard to arms aid in general. Furthermore, the psychological impact of certain acts by the Greek military had made our task very difficult. We were all looking for clear signs of progress towards constitutional democracy. If the objectives of the Greek Government become clearer and a sense of purpose in restoring democratic ways becomes more evident, this would go a long way to bring Greek-U.S. relations back to its traditionally friendly relationship. Understanding each others problems and bringing about a steady improvement in our relations should be our mutual goal. He asked the Ambassador to feel free to call on him or his colleagues at any time.